

Year 2: How to avoid feeling overwhelmed

Learning objectives

- To know how to avoid feeling overwhelmed by difficult problems
- To know how to make problems easier to understand by breaking them down
- To know how to use their curiosity to increase their ability to learn

Resources

- Whiteboard or flipchart
- Tangrams or the 'Tangram' sheet
- Optional: electrical circuit games, such as Buzz Wire or Operation Game

Downloadable resources

- Year 2 'Resilience' PowerPoint
- 'Tangram' sheet
- 'Break it down, build it back up' sheet

Curricular links

Science

- Experience and observe phenomena, looking more closely at the natural and humanly constructed world around them; Be curious and ask questions about what they notice

Lesson

Many children feel that they should be able to solve problems immediately and can feel overwhelmed when faced with a task that appears too difficult. Inflexibility and a fear of failure may considerably reduce a child's resilience in tackling problems and challenges. This lesson teaches children to examine problems and simplify them into parts that are easier to understand.

The practical activity involves using curiosity to break down or rearrange a tangram to better understand what it is and what can be done with it. The children are then encouraged to adopt a similar 'break it down and rebuild it' approach to any problem that may appear to be overwhelming. Before the lesson, prepare the tangrams or cut out the tangram on the 'Tangram' sheet (one for each group).

1 Introduce the lesson:

Today we will be learning about how to be resilient when we have a difficult problem to solve.

Can anyone recall some facts about resilience?

2 Encourage the children to share their ideas, using the notes below as prompts to guide the discussion.

When we are resilient we are able to:

- keep going when things are difficult
- try new ways to solve problems.

Without resilience we:

- give up too easily
- get overwhelmed when faced with a difficult problem.

3 Focus on the word 'overwhelmed':

You may not be familiar with the word 'overwhelmed' – it can mean to be swamped by something, such as a huge amount of water, but it can also describe how someone feels when they have very difficult problems to deal with.

4 Show PowerPoint slides 1 and 2.

Who is being overwhelmed in the picture on slide 2? Can you say why? How is the man feeling? (He feels like giving up, he feels hopeless)

5 Show PowerPoint slide 3.

It isn't just water that can overwhelm people. What is about to overwhelm this man? (The litter that he's dumping) Why is he going to be overwhelmed? (He is throwing his litter out without recycling it and he hasn't noticed that it's going to overwhelm him) How will he feel when he is overwhelmed? (He'll be worried about the problem that he has created for himself. He won't know what to do)



- 6 Show PowerPoint slide 4. Point to the divide, subtract, multiply and equals signs. *What is overwhelming the girl? (The difficult-looking maths. She doesn't know whether to divide, subtract or multiply) How is she feeling? (Confused and hopeless. She wants to give up)*
Difficult problems can make us feel overwhelmed, like the girl in the slide. However, one way to overcome these feelings is to engage our curiosity and examine or look closely at the problem, just as a detective might do.
- 7 Show PowerPoint slide 5.
 You may wish to ask the children if they know what detectives are and what they do.
Detectives examine everything closely, looking for anything interesting, strange or unusual. They may not be able to find all the answers straight away, but they are resilient – they don't give up and they keep working and gathering as much information as they can.
- 8 Show PowerPoint slide 6.
Like a detective, we are going to find out as much as we can about this puzzling item. It's called a tangram.
- *What is it for?*
 - *What can you do with it?*
- 9 Show PowerPoint slide 7.
 Explain that all of the parts can be rearranged to make new shapes such as a house or a creature.
Just like a detective you may not find all the answers straight away, but you must be resilient and keep going, gathering all the evidence that you can.
To help you learn what the tangram can do you may:
- *separate all the coloured parts from each other*
 - *try reassembling the parts in different ways.*
- At the end you must put the tangram back together again.*
- 10 Tell the children to go to the tangrams that you have set out and to start investigating them. Circulate among the groups during the investigation and use the **character coaching** phrases to reinforce and encourage the children's resilience and curiosity. Any small gains in understanding should be celebrated. If any group succeeds in creating a new and recognisable shape with the tangram draw attention to it so that each group may learn from another's success.

Bringing it together – what have we learned?

- We have learned that something that looks difficult can be broken down into parts which are easier to understand.
- It is good to use your curiosity and investigate things closely.
- We can find out more about a problem by playing with it.

Character coaching

It is important to reinforce and encourage the children's **resilience, understanding** and **curiosity** as they undertake the activities. When possible, use this as an opportunity to make the link between breaking a problem or difficult task down into smaller parts to make it more manageable.

Praise:

Well done! Just like a detective you are showing resilience by keeping going and finding out more.

Guidance:

Try not to feel overwhelmed. This is a puzzle and you can play with it to find out more.

Don't give up. What else can you find out?

Correction:

You may not have been able to put the tangram back together, but please be resilient and continue trying.

Star Awards Challenge

Ask the children to create a poster to encourage others to keep going when they start to feel overwhelmed. Read out the sentences below or encourage the children to create their own encouraging wording for their poster.

Break it down to build it up!

Keep going!

Take a closer look!

Get curious not furious!

Don't give up!

Take it step by step.

Further developments

The following week the children should return with their poster. You may wish to use the follow-up session to share and discuss these posters, or you may wish to undertake the activities suggested on the 'Break it down, build it back up' sheet (they will require the 'Tangram' sheet or the tangrams to accompany this), which will provide the class with opportunities to apply the skills developed in the previous week.